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28 May 1975

Dear George:

You may be interested in certain of the views developed in the first discussion session held under the auspices of the Center for the Study of Intelligence on the subject of intelligence support for the conduct of foreign policy. As you may know, the Center is undertaking a study on this question and the discussion session contributed to the formulation of a research approach to the project. The next steps by the research team will involve:

- Surveying the written literature on the subject and preparing a short paper describing the existing "intelligence doctrine" on the issue.
- Researching a series of case studies in the process of policy formulation and ascertaining how CIA intelligence support fitted in. The case studies will come from some developed by the Murphy Commission and from some CIA post-mortems. The purpose will be to discern common threads and principal lessons in providing intelligence support.
- Beginning a series of interviews and discussions with a variety of CIA and other intelligence people who have had experience in or given serious thought to the role of intelligence support of foreign policy.
- Drawing on the steps above and drafting a set of basic issues and questions that the written study must deal with. This list of issues can also serve as a departure point for interviews with an appropriate cross section of policy makers.

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In the course of this process we hope to convene CIA officers in additional discussion sessions on various sub-elements of the project. We would greatly appreciate any reactions or suggestions you may have to the attached paper and would be happy to know of your interest in attending any future discussion sessions on this question.

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Director, Center for the
Study of Intelligence

Att.

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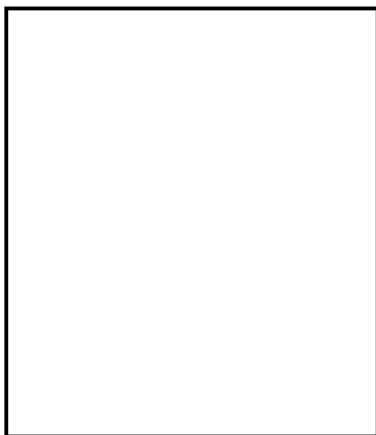
SUBJECT: Research Study on CIA Intelligence Support for the Conduct of Foreign Policy

On 19 May 1975 members of the research team undertaking this project in the Center for the Study of Intelligence met with a dozen knowledgeable and experienced intelligence practitioners from a cross-section of CIA offices. The observations on the following pages were distilled from the session and from certain points made by Roger Hilsman in a talk later the same evening.

The research team will proceed to take counsel individually with a wider range of CIA intelligence officers and managers. It also plans, after careful preparation, to carry out a series of systematic interviews with our consumers.

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Participants in the 19 May Discussion:



OSI
OCI
DDO
OPR
DDO
OSR
CSI
OGCR
OER
OCI
IC Staff
NIO

Members of the Research Team



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Comments and Observations

During a period when the quality of CIA-produced finished intelligence has been steadily improving, the use of that intelligence in foreign policy formulation seems to have increased little or not at all. The problems underlying this situation appear to be so deep-seated that no magic solution can be expected. Yet a better understanding on the part of intelligence producers of why the relationship between policy makers and intelligence providers is persistently difficult might set the stage for gradual progress.

Policy makers is a term which covers a large number of people on many different levels doing a wide variety of things. Policy is sometimes made at the top by reasoned, sweeping decision; more often it is made gradually and incrementally at levels much lower. Thus intelligence producers should not expect, or even want, to reach the highest level policy makers with all their intelligence products.

Policy makers live in a different world than that inhabited by intelligence producers. That is the case no matter what their policy level. The character of their tasks, the imperatives to which they must respond, the demands upon their time and energy, and the very attitudes which bring them success--all these things tend to distance them from the intelligence producers--all these things make ready access and easy rapport exceedingly difficult.

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A thorough examination of the existing and potential relationship between intelligence producer and policy maker can best proceed from an understanding that the chasm between the two is a natural chasm. It cannot be closed, but perhaps it can be better bridged.

Past efforts to extract from policy makers their views concerning the CIA intelligence products provided them have brought, for the most part, rather impressionistic and general comments. Another approach would be to inquire concerning categories of intelligence. These could be devised in various ways, the object being to assure a maximum return of more specific commentary. CIA finished intelligence products provided in support of policy formulation could, for instance be categorized as:

- a. primarily factual
- b. primarily interpretive commentary
- c. primarily analytical
- d. primarily predictive

In another dimension, they could be designated as:

- a. primarily military
- b. primarily scientific-technical
- c. primarily geographic
- d. primarily economic
- e. primarily political

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Such categories would not be applicable for general publications like the National Intelligence Daily or for unfinished, spot intelligence reports; they would be appropriate for estimates, memoranda, research studies, etc.

Tests of quality and relevance are among the most important to which intelligence products are continually subject. Various intelligence products prepared in support of SALT have drawn praise from policy makers for meeting these criteria particularly well. (Interestingly, much of the content of these papers has been factual as well as military.) Strong appreciation for products which are both primarily predictive and primarily political has been much rarer. Predictive intelligence, including informal estimative papers as well as formal National Intelligence Estimates, is a difficult part of the business; it draws frequent criticism from policy makers. Part of their concern is with omission rather than commission--the seemingly predictable adverse development that catches everyone by surprise. Criticism is also levied at estimative papers which substitute waffling for clear prediction; lucid language, imaginative approach, and rigorous analysis are valued in NIEs as in other intelligence products.

Providing relevant intelligence of high quality is never easy and is made the more complicated by problems of communication with policy makers. They do not always request the appropriate intelligence paper in a situation demanding a policy

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decision; often they request none at all. Nor do they always inform the preparers of a requested intelligence paper that they intend certain policy actions--actions which may influence the course of developments and thus change the mix of factors on which the intelligence judgments must rest. And after an intelligence paper is provided, they seldom provide the kind of feedback which could help ensure quality and relevance in future intelligence products.

However that may be, the Agency and particularly the NIOs will be actively working for a broad improvement of communications with policy makers. The NSCIC working group and its intelligence panel may be of some help. But there is little expectation of a durable solution to the feedback problem.

What then can CIA people themselves do? Are present attitudes and procedures within the Agency helping as much as they might to make products relevant? Do the heads of analytical offices, the NIOs, the area specialists, sit down together regularly and frequently to consider what intelligence might relate most closely to policy makers' concerns two or three months hence? Do CIA people try to put themselves in the position of the policy makers in this sort of thinking ahead?

Is CIA doing all that it can to minimize the number of times it will be taken by surprise? Does the analyst with the off-beat view have ample opportunity for a hearing? Is the

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minority interpretation or prediction given adequate attention? Is the machinery of the Alert Memorandum sufficient to this need? Should the Agency also have a procedure like State's "dissenter" channel? Or would there be merit in periodically convening a panel of selected intelligence officers, of known predictive talent, to think about the unthinkable?

The "competing centers of analysis" within the Intelligence Community do not appear to provide the sort of safeguard which they theoretically should against intelligence surprise. State/INR is engaged more closely than ever in current work to support the Secretary; DIA is devoting only limited assets to look-ahead and estimative intelligence. CIA, de facto, inherits the responsibility to try harder than ever.

If the system of "competing centers of analysis" is not working at full steam, the contest of competing flows of paper is. Unquestionably the policy makers are getting more intelligence products than they can give time and attention to; unquestionably this phenomenon complicates the Agency's difficulties in getting appropriate responses and feedback to its products. Conceivably a Community-wide approach could be taken to reducing the inundation.

CIA's finished intelligence products will, even so, have to compete hard. Further advances can probably be made in presentation

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and packaging--though a very sophisticated standard has already been reached. The concentration now should surely be on continuing improvement of the message, rather than the medium.